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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIE-00 INRE-00 IO-13 ACDA-12 OMB-01
TRSE-00 /074 W
----------024407 162157Z /41
O R 161919Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9922
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 0893

DEPT PLEASE PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR DR. BRZEZINSKY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, IT, US
SUBJECT: ITALIAN REACTION TO DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ON ITALY

SUMMARY: ITALIAN REACTION TO THE DEPARTMENT'S JANUARY 12 STATEMENT ON ITALY HAS RANGED FROM EUPHORIC TO BITTERLY CRITICAL. IT RECEIVED HEAVY FRONT-PAGE PRESS TREATMENT FOR THREE DAYS. PREDICTABLY, COMMUNIST AND LEFT PARTY COMMENT WAS HARSH. COMMUNIST LEADERS CALLED IT "A SLAP ON ITALY'S FACE" AND "IADMISSABLE INTERFERENCE" ON THE PART OF THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION AND AMBASSADOR GARDNER. SOCIALISTS AND REPUBLICANS WERE ALMOST AS NEGATIVE IN THEIR EVALUATIONS. IN RESPONSE TO THIS CRITICISM IMPUGNING ITALY'S INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS ISSUED A STATEMENT WHICH DEFENDED THE RIGHT OF AN ALLY AND FRIEND TO EXPRESS PREOCCUPATIONS (EVEN IF THEY CONSIDERED THEM UNFOUNDED), BUT STRESSED THE PARTY'S INDEPENDENCE OF ACTION AND JUDGMENT. IN THEIR
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PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS, HOWEVER, MANY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT MODERATES, INCLUDING THE DC REFORM GROUP, APPLAUDED THE US STATEMENTS
,
TERMING IT HELPFUL IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PRESENT SITUATION. SPEAKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT, FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI'S COMMENTS WERE MORE CRITICAL, TERMING THE US DECLARATION UNHELPFUL. DEFENSE MINISTER RUFFINI CALLED IT "PERFECT, PRECISE AND CORRECT." MOST OF THE NON-

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PARTY PRESS, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LEFT-WING LA REPUBBLICA, WHICH HAS BEEN VIOLENTLY CRITICAL, GAVE THE US STATEMENT EXTENSIVE AND POSITIVE TREATMENT. BY MONDAY POLITICAL REACTIONS AND PRESS COVERAGE SHOWED SIGNS OF EBBING. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT'S PUBLIC POSITION TOWARD THE US STATEMENT REFLECTS THE POLITICAL EXINGENCIES OF THAT PARTY TO DEMONSTRAT THAT IT IS NOT A CLIENT OF THE USG NOTWITHSTANDING ITS WELL-KNOWN CLOSE 30-YEAR ASSOCIATION WITH THE US AND ITS FIRM SUPPORT OF NATO AS THE CORNERSTONE OF ITS FOREIGN POLICY. THE DC MADE ITS OFFICIAL POSITION KNOWN ON JANUARY 13, FOLLOWING AN INFORMAL MEETING OF ANDREOTTI, MORO AND ZACCAGNINI, IN A STATEMENT BY THE HEAD OF THE DC'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICE, LUIGI GRANELLI. ACCORDING TO GRANELLI, THE FRANK EXPRESSION OF CONCERN BY A COUNTRY "TO WHICH WE ARE BOUND BY FRIENDSHIP AND MUTUAL INTEREST" IS NOT A CUASE FOR SCANDAL "SINCE IT IS ON THE BASIS OF RECIPROCAL INDEPENDENCE OV VIEWS" THAT "SUBJECTIVE OR UNFOUNDED DIFFERENCES ON THE ITALIAN SITUATION CAN BE CORRECTED." GRANELLI NOTED THE "UNUSUAL RECOURSE TO A FORMAL STATEMENT". HE ADDED THAT THE US STATEMENT WOULD NOT, HOWEVER, IMPEDE THE DC FROM MAKING ITS OWN INDEPENDENT JUDGMENTS. GRANELLI CONCLUDED THAT THE GOI WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY "FIND THE WAY TO REITERATE, IN THE MOST APPROPRIATE FORM, ITS RIGHT AND DUTY TO GUARANTEE THE ABSOLUTE INDEPENDENCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES OF THE REPUBLIC WITH RESPECT TO (ITALY'S) INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS."

2. ASKED TO COMMENT FROM THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT, FOREIGN
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MINISTER FORLANI SEEMED UNPREPARED WHEN CAUGHT BY REPORTERS AT THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUP MEETING. HE NOTED THAT THE US STATEMENT HAD NOT BEEN DELIVERED THROUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND THAT "IT DID NOT SEEM TO INVOLVE FOREIGN POLICY." WHEN PRESSED, FORLANI AGREED THAT HE WAS "SURPRISED" THE US HAD ISSUED A STATEMENT, BUT SAID THAT IT REFLECTED WELL KNOWN US POSITIONS. SUCH STATEMENTS, HE SAID, WERE "NEVER HELPFUL IN RESOLVING OUR PROBLEMS." COMMENT: TIONING

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 0893

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THEMSELVES AS THE DEFENDERS OF THE COUNTRY'S NATIONAL HONOR IN THE FACE OF THIS INTERFERENCE. AN UNSIGNED EDITORIAL JANUARY 13 IN L'UNITA, THE PARTY'S OFFICIAL DAILY, NOTED THAT THE STATEMENT "IS A POLITICAL ACT THAT IT IS DIFFICULT NOT TO REGARD AS AN OPEN AND HEAVY INTERFERENCE, AIMED AT INFLUENCING THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF OUR COUNTRY, IN CONTRAST WITH THE PRINCIPLE OF NONINTERFERENCE REPEATEDLY PROCLAIMED IN ITS GENERAL LINES BY PRESIDENT CARTER HIMSELF." L'UNITA SUGGESTS THAT THE STATEMENT WAS MADE AT THE URGING OF CERTAIN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC CIRCLES AND OBSERVES "IT IS A SERIOUS THING THAT AMBASSADOR GARDNER HAS LENT HIMSELF TO SUCH A MANEUVER WHICH CAUSES WELL-FOUNDED CONCERN AND REQUIRES A CLEAR-CUT REJECTION."

6. PCI SECRETARIAT MEMBER GIORGIO NAPOLITANO, IN A RADIO INTERVIEW JANUARY 13 SAID THAT NARROWER AND MORE SCHEMATIC VIEWS HAD PREVAILED FOR THE MOMENT WITHIN THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. HE CONFIDENTIAL

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ADDED THAT "THE JUDGMENTS EXPRESSED BY THE AMERICAN ADMINISTRATION ARE MISTAKEN BECAUSE THEY ARE BASED ON A VIEW OF THE PCI WHICH IS COMPLETELY DEFORMED." IN A SUBSEQUENT PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, NAPOLITANO PARTICULARLY COMPALINED ABOUT THE INCLUSION IN THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT OF THE EXCERPT FROM PRESIDENT CARTER'S STATEMENT IN PARIS.

7. GIAN CARLO PAJETTA, THE MERCURIAL AND OUTSPOKEN PCI SECRETARIAT MEMBER WHO IS ALSO THE PARTY'S CHIEF FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN, TERMED THE AMERICAN STATEMENT "INADMISSIBLE AND GROTESQUE." IN AN INTERVIEW TO THE COMMUNIST-LEANING ROME DAILY PAESE SERA (PUBLISHED JANUARY 14), PAJETTA ADDED THAT "SOMEONE WANTED TO GIVE A SLAP TO ITALY." CONTINUING, PAJETTA SAID "IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT THE US, A COUNTRY WHICH HAS NOTHING TO SAY ABOUT THE MANNER IN

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WHICH THE GOVERNMENTS OF IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA ARE FORMED AND OPERATE, AND WITH WHOSE RULERS NEW YEARS'S GREETINGS AND EMBRACES ARE EXCHANGED, PRETENDS TO EXPRESS JUDGMENTS...ON THE MANNER IN WHICH ITALY'S CONSTITUTIONAL PARTIES OUGHT TO REGULATE THEIR RECIPROCAL RELATIONS."

8. THE SOCIALIST PAPER, AVANTI, HAS SHARPLY CONDEMNED THE DEPARTMENT'S DECLARATION IN EDITORIALS IN EACH OF ITS ISSUES SINCE DECEMBER 12. AVANTI HAS CHARACTERIZED THE STATEMENT AS UNACCEPTABLE IN BOTH PRINCIPAL AND PRACTICE AND HAS POINTED OUT THAT NEITHER THE REPUBLICAN NOR THE SOCIALIST PARTY SHARE THE AMERICAN VIEW OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY. AVANTI HAS ALSO GIVEN PROMINENT PLAY TO STATEMENTS IN ITALY AND ABROAD WHICH HAVE BEEN CRITICAL OF THE AMERICAN STATEMENT. THE ONLY SOCIALIST PARTY LEADER TO SPEAK OUT PUBLICLY SO FAR HAS BEEN ENRICO MANCA (PSI LEFT-WING), WHO, IN AN INTERVIEW IN THE LEFTIST DAILY LA REPUBBLICA ON JANUARY 14, LABELED THE STATEMENT "LOW BLACKMAIL" AND SAID THAT THOSE WHO CHALLENGE THE PCI TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INDEPENDENCE OF MOSCOW SHOULD CALL UPON THE DC TO DEMONSTRATE ITS INDEPNDENCE OF WASHINGTON. ANOTHER PSI LEFT-
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WING LEADER, GIACOMO MANCINI, IN A MEETING WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER JAN. 16 WAS SHARPLY CRITICAL OF THE STATEMENT WHICH HE SAID WAS ALSO A GREAT EMBARRASSMENT TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY. IN MANCINI'S VIEW THE STATEMENT WOULD BACKFIRE--TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY--BECAUSE THE ITALIAN PEOPLE WOULD RESENT SUCH HEAVY FOREIGN INTERFERENCE.

9. THE VIEW OF REPUBLICAN PARTY WAS EXPRESSED IN A FRONT-PAGE EDITORIAL IN LA VOCE REPUBBLICANA WHICH RECOGNIZED THE USG'S STATEMENT AS A LEGITIMATE EXPRESSION OF CONCERN. IT SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE USG MAY NOT ADEQUATELY UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEX ITALIAN SITUATION, AS WELL AS THE CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHIN THE COMMUNIST PARTY. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTIES HAVE DEFENDED THE STATEMENT. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY SECRETARY ROMITA SAID THAT IT BASICALLY REPRESENTED THE KNOWN VIEW OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND CHARACTERIZED IT AS A LEGITIMATE EXPRESSION OF USG CONCERN. BOTH PARTIES, HOWEVER, EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ITALIANRMPOLI TICAL FORCES MAKING INDEPENDENT DECISIONS FOR THEMSELVES.

11. THE NON-PARTY PRESS GAVE THE US STATEMENT EXTENSIVE AND GENERALLY POSITIVE TREATMENT. THE CONSERVATIVE AND CENTER PRESS DESCRIBED THE STATEMENT AS CLEAR, FIRM, SALUTARY AND A LEGITIMATE ACT BY A FRIENDLY NATION AND ALLY. MANY HAVE PROMINENT,CONTRASTING ATTENTION TO PRAVDA'S CALL FOR THE PCI'S INCLUSION IN THE GOVERN-MENT. A DISCORDANT NOTE WAS SOUNDED, HOWEVER, BY TURIN'S MODERATE LA STAMPA WHICH EDITORIALIZED THAT THE STATEMENT WAS PROBABLY NOT HELPFUL IN THAT IT COULD COMPLICATE AN ALREADY TENSE POLITICAL SITUATION. THE LEFT PRESS WAS PREDICTABLY CRITICAL BUT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF LA REPUBBLICA, MODERATE IN TONE. THE LATTER

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VIOLENTLY ATTACKED THE US STATEMENT AS "UNPRECEDENTLY HARSH," ACCUSING THE USG AND AMBASSADOR GARDNER OF CAUSING THE DC TO STIFFEN ITS RESISTANCE TO THE PCI AND OF PROVOKING A SLIDE ON THE LIRA. DETAILED PRESS REACTIONS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED IN USIS'S DAILY PRESS MESSAGES.

12. FINALLY THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY IN GENERAL HAS REACTED POSITIVELY
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TO THE US STATEMENT. THE FINANCIAL DAILY, IL SOLE 24 ORE, WHICH CLOSELY REFLECTS THE VIEWS OF CONFINDUSTRIA, THE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION, COMMENTED THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT IS A HELPFUL CLARIFICATION OF THE US POSITION. "NOW WE KNOW WHERE THE US STANDS." IN A PRIVATE COMMENT, GIOVANNI AGNELLI TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE US STATEMENT WAS FIRST RATE: "IF ANYTHING, THE USG HAS BEEN SILENT TOO LONG."

13. AS DEPARTMENT WILL RECOGNIZE, MOST OF FOREGOING IS PUBLIC REACTION AND TO A CERTAIN EXTENT PUBLIC POSTURING. AS WE GATHER MORE SUBSTANTIVE REACTION IN PRIVATE CONTACTS, WE WILL REPORT FURTHER. GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, IT, US
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